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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document has been prepared in response to Executive Board decision 2004/28, which requested the Executive Director to submit to the Board at its second regular session 2005, a review of the impact of the UNFPA Technical Advisory Programme (TAP) against strategic goals as contained in the UNFPA multi-year funding framework (MYFF), 2004-2007, in close consultation with partners, and to seek ways to harmonize the TAF cycle.

2. At its first regular session 2002, the Board endorsed a shift in the emphasis of the UNFPA Country Technical Services Teams (CSTs) towards more strategic interventions; a greater focus on capacity development and knowledge sharing; and increased reliance on national as well as regional human and institutional resources. This shift also transformed the arrangement with United Nations partners into a more effective framework, through the strategic partnerships programme. At its annual session 2003, the Board reviewed and took note of the monitoring and evaluation system for the TAP, which includes a midterm review.

3. In 2004, the Executive Board reviewed the findings of the midterm review and requested an in-depth external evaluation of the TAP as the basis for considering its extension through 2007. The major findings of the evaluation and the UNFPA response to the findings are contained in this document. Since the TAP will be harmonized with the UNFPA biennial support budget, the MYFF and the intercountry programme from 2008, this document presents elements for a longer-term vision within the context of United Nations reform, the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (TCPR) and the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Background

4. The TAP (described in the annex) constitutes the UNFPA strategy to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of its technical support in reproductive health, population and development, and gender. It is also an important part of the strategy to increase the impact of the UNFPA contribution to national priorities within the broader context of poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

5. The TAP is composed of nine multidisciplinary CSTs, each supervised by a director. The composition and technical skills of each CST respond to the specific needs and capacities of the regions and subregions in which they are located. Their primary responsibility is to provide technical support and to develop capacity at regional and country levels. In addition, the CSTs also provide a field-based regional perspective and undertake knowledge sharing at organizational and regional levels. The nine teams, together with the Technical Support Division at headquarters, constitute the UNFPA technical advisory system, which provides integrated technical support to the UNFPA programming process and works with other sources of technical assistance – national institutions, regional institutions and the United Nations system.

6. The TAP also includes the strategic partnerships programme with United Nations partners. This initiative is a results-based partnership developed according to the priorities and comparative advantages of each partner organization. It provides substantive guidance and tools to countries in order to promote coherent operations among United Nations partners.

7. The expected outcomes of the TAP, as approved by the Executive Board in decision 2002/3, are: (a) increased national and regional capacities to provide technical support for population and development programmes; (b) increased availability and use of technical information, including lessons learned, to improve the effectiveness of national population and development programmes; and (c) improved strategic and technical support at key stages of the UNFPA programme cycle and in United Nations system-wide processes.

8. The current TAP has been implemented since 2002. During its first year of implementation, which was a transition year, the programme defined the new profile of CST advisers and the new composition of the teams. Thus, the TAP had been in operation for just over two years at the time of the in-depth evaluation in 2005. It is noteworthy that the TAP has been implemented within the context of major internal and external reforms that have impacted the provision of technical assistance by UNFPA and the United Nations system in general.

9. The internal changes in UNFPA during the last few years have been significant. The Fund's transition process – particularly the programming changes adopted in response to the new strategic direction and the modifications that were introduced to strengthen country offices – have had a major impact on the demands for technical assistance. The Fund has sought to increase its impact by using its resources to generate greater support for the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and to emphasize the linkages between population and poverty.

10. The reformulation of the intercountry programme in 2003 entailed close articulation and mutual support between different programming levels (country, regional and global). The UNFPA Global Staff Meeting in 2004 proposed specific actions to better integrate the ICPD agenda into national policy dialogues, stressing the need to forge stronger partnerships with other agencies and development partners.

11. These changes called on UNFPA to position itself in national development frameworks with concrete, evidence-based arguments to support the replication and scaling up of interventions. This prompted a need for a more effective approach to technical assistance. At the same time, the new UNFPA human resources strategy sought to reinforce the technical and operational capacity of country offices in order to reduce the need for the kind of operational support (for example, survey methodology) that the CSTs had provided in the past. This has allowed the CSTs to be more involved in national poverty reduction strategies that have become a major driver of development planning and that have required UNFPA to link its efforts in reproductive health, population and development, and gender to outcomes in poverty reduction.

12. United Nations reform involves processes that have had an impact on the nature of CST work. Chief among these was the harmonization of the tools and products of country programming processes by United Nations agencies, including the common country assessment (CCA), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the country programme action plan (CPAP), joint monitoring and evaluation, and financial transfer modalities. The TCPR emphasized the need for improved quality in the common country programming process and had an important impact on the CSTs.

13. The paragraphs that follow describe the main findings of the independent evaluation of the TAP; provide recommendations for a two-year extension of the TAP for 2006-2007; and introduce elements for a longer-term vision for technical support. In 2006-2007, UNFPA will seek to enhance the effectiveness of the current TAP and to prepare for more fundamental changes in providing technical support for the

four-year cycle beginning in 2008, when the content and the cycles of the MYFF, the intercountry programme, the TAP and the biennial support budget will be harmonized.

14. Recommendations for the short term and the long term fit within the context of United Nations reform, which has created imperatives to work together and make the United Nations system more relevant to national development efforts. The recommendations concur with the emphasis of the TCPR on improving the capacity of the United Nations system to address the challenges of a changing world with a shared vision of development. They also concur with the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which stressed the need to further align technical and financial support with country needs, by strengthening national and regional capacities and by promoting national ownership of development processes and outcomes. The proposals herein are aligned with efforts to improve internal coherence and efficiency within the United Nations system in order to build national capacity to support national priorities.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE IN-DEPTH EVALUATION

15. The purpose of the in-depth evaluation was to assess: (a) whether the TAP was fulfilling its role within the context of the UNFPA strategic direction in maximizing the impact of interventions; (b) the achievement of TAP outputs at country, regional and global levels; and (c) the relevance and usefulness of the outputs. The findings of the external evaluation are based on the review of pertinent documentation; interviews with senior management, all the CSTs, national counterparts and United Nations partners; and an analysis of questionnaires from 47 country offices.

III. FINDINGS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

16. The external evaluation revealed that the TAP system, which includes the CSTs and the strategic partnership programme, was beneficial to the effective implementation of the ICPD. The evaluation concluded that: (a) the TAP provides UNFPA with a coherent system with which to deliver technical support to countries; (b) the TAP has increased the accessibility and use of technical information and is a cost-effective way of supporting capacity-building at country, regional and subregional levels; and (c) the TAP has been instrumental in supporting country office implementation of United Nations reform processes. The CSTs provide UNFPA with regional knowledge and a field presence that facilitate UNFPA work with both United Nations and non-United Nations regional agencies. The strategic partnerships programme is recognized as an important instrument in increasing cooperation between UNFPA and other United Nations agencies. The evaluation found that the TAP plays an important role and should therefore be extended for a two-year period (2006-2007).

17. The CSTs have made significant contributions to developing policies, strategies and technical approaches at regional and global levels. The CSTs have reviewed technical standards and policies to ensure that they reflect the realities of different regions and have produced knowledge assets and lessons learned, based on their knowledge of field conditions. UNFPA has enhanced its presence and participation at the regional level through the CSTs, which work closely with regional economic and political institutions, and which build partnerships with regional banks. At the country level, the CSTs have been increasingly involved in national development frameworks and in key stages of the country programme development process, within the context of aid harmonization.

18. The evaluation also found that the implementation of the TAP required adjustments. These are necessary to ensure that the original intentions of the TAP are carried out more effectively and to ensure

that the TAP responds to the needs of a changing environment. The main issues raised by the evaluation, and the actions that UNFPA proposes to address them, are presented in the following paragraphs.

Challenges and proposed actions

Challenge 1. Managing multiple demands

19. A central concern revealed by the evaluation relates to the ability of the CSTs to respond to the multiplicity and variety of demands placed upon them. According to the TAP model, the primary role of the CSTs was to provide support at the policy level for national development frameworks, sector-wide approaches and poverty reduction strategies. The CSTs were encouraged to become a source of substantive analysis in the countries and regions they served and for UNFPA. Their primary function was to assist in analysing countries' needs and opportunities, within the context of institutional comparative advantages, and to support policy dialogue to engage other partners in pursuing the ICPD agenda.

20. The implementation of this role for the CSTs involved a transformation from the previous UNFPA modus operandi in technical assistance. CST advisers would now be more involved in programming and more proactive in their work, instead of responding primarily to ad hoc requests from country offices. It was expected that direct support by the CSTs to countries would diminish since the CST advisers would no longer respond to all requests for technical support; greater use was to be made of national and regional institutions and experts.

21. However, the number of missions carried out by the advisers has not decreased substantially, as had been expected. This is party due to the limited use of national and regional experts to provide technical assistance. In addition, not all country offices implemented the UNFPA strategic direction at the same pace. The move towards building partnerships to better implement the ICPD Programme of Action has not been operationalized as rapidly as had been envisioned. The evaluation found that, despite the reduction in the size of the CSTs and their changed functions, country offices expected them to continue to provide all types of technical assistance.

22. Furthermore, the CSTs were expected to become more active in formulating regional and institutional policies, guidelines and strategies. At the regional level, they are now more involved in formulating and implementing regional programmes and projects. As a result, they are playing a greater role in regional and institutional concerns and contributing to evidence-based arguments, lessons learned and best practices, as well as reviewing institutional approaches. This has resulted in an increased demand for CST assistance from UNFPA headquarters.

23. In addition, the CSTs also fulfil responsibilities in capacity development. All CSTs carry out a number of activities in this area, such as training. They also occasionally represent UNFPA at global, regional and national events. Considering the variety of different functions, the changing nature of their work, and the demands for missions and other non-mission related activities, the evaluation concluded that the CSTs are being requested to do too much. This has affected their overall performance.

Proposed action

24. Providing both strategic and technical support to countries continues to be the main priority of the TAP. In order to improve its efficacy, better planning, a sharpening of the focus of the work of the CSTs, and sustained support from outside sources of technical support must be built into the system in 2006-2007. In this connection, UNFPA will undertake three initiatives.

25. First, UNFPA will emphasize that CST advisers will provide support that will be strategic in nature. This means that CST advisers will focus on helping UNFPA country offices better position themselves for policy dialogue, with evidence-based arguments suitable for the national context and for strategic planning purposes. CST advisers will prepare environmental scans and analyses, and collate lessons learned and best practices to enhance policy dialogue, particularly for interagency initiatives. These initiatives include programming for the MDGs, the CCA and the UNDAF, poverty reduction strategies and sector work, including sector-wide approaches and sector reforms. CST inputs will be planned in light of opportunities to achieve the best results in national policies and plans. Requests from headquarters for CST support will be better coordinated and will focus on strategic inputs.

26. Second, UNFPA will refocus CST staff profiling and recruitment practices. Future recruitment of CST advisers will be based on competencies that fulfil the strategic role that advisers will be expected to play. UNFPA will also formulate a plan to continuously update advisers' skills. CST responsibilities and activities in capacity development will be more clearly defined according to specific regional needs and priorities.

27. Third, technical assistance needs that do not require institutional knowledge of UNFPA will, in the future, be handled through networks of national and regional experts and institutions. The CSTs will continue to serve as the clearing house for this assistance. More effective networks of experts and institutions will have to be identified. Given the diverse regional situations regarding the availability of technical expertise, the CSTs will apply various approaches in responding to country needs.

Challenge 2: Participation of CSTs in national development frameworks and United Nations programming processes

28. The CSTs have participated actively in joint programming and in other initiatives launched within the context of United Nations reform. However, their effectiveness in these processes has been uneven. The nature of the TAP role in these processes needs to be better understood and defined. United Nations reform processes, such as the CCA and UNDAF, provide unique opportunities for improved policy dialogue and for building stronger partnerships to achieve national development goals, including MDGs.

29. CST participation in joint exercises has increased substantially. For instance, the CST in Amman, Jordan, supported the integration of ICPD into national development frameworks; supported costing exercises on actions to achieve the MDGs; and provided assistance to countries for their annual programme reviews. In Africa, the CSTs worked with other United Nations regional teams and institutions, such as the African Development Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in the context of the MDGs and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Sixty per cent of all missions undertaken by CST advisers in 2003-2004 supported: (a) regional and national development frameworks, policies and strategies; (b) key stages of the UNFPA programming cycle; or (c) organizational and regional policies and strategies, within the context of United Nations reform.

30. Such activities notwithstanding, the evaluation noted a discrepancy between the potential role for the CSTs to contribute to such exercises and actual results. Part of the problem stemmed from the uneven quality of some of the programming exercises, which were not always country-owned or which often focused more on process than substance. The coordination and the timing of CST participation in such exercises must be reviewed. CST participation is usually requested during the course of the interagency exercises. Since these exercises tend to be long and undertaken in small groups, it may be difficult to maintain a CST presence therein. More importantly, CST involvement during the exercises, instead of during the preparatory stage, dilutes the contribution that an analysis of needs and opportunities could bring to these initiatives.

Proposed action

31. To ensure that UNFPA effectively supports national priorities in the context of poverty reduction efforts, CST contributions must go beyond processes. The CSTs should be a key source of substantive inputs for the policy dialogue carried out in such contexts. In order to do this, the primary change that will be introduced concerns refocusing the nature and timing of the CST contribution to programming processes and national development frameworks. The support that the CSTs can best provide is centred on the preparatory phase for policy dialogue within each substantive area. It does not require CST advisers to be present during the entire process of discussion and negotiation.

32. CSTs will provide analyses that will position the ICPD agenda during meetings with donors, agencies and national counterparts. They will carry out substantive studies and propose specific courses of action in view of needs, opportunities and comparative advantages. The analytical work of the CSTs in generating evidence-based arguments and in compiling lessons learned and best practices will focus primarily on preparatory analyses for interagency collaboration and policy dialogue.

Challenge 3: Contribution to capacity development

33. UNFPA has identified capacity development as a key task for the CSTs. All CSTs have undertaken activities to increase national and regional capacities to provide technical support for population and development programmes. They have identified and strengthened the network of institutions and national experts capable of providing technical assistance in their regions. They have maintained a database of regional and national consultants and carried out a variety of training activities for both country office staff and national counterparts. The CSTs have increasingly used external experts to provide technical support for UNFPA country programmes and to prepare analytical documents.

34. Nevertheless, the evaluation suggested that the long-term value of various activities for capacity development and self-reliance is uncertain. Capacity-development efforts are being undertaken in the absence of an updated assessment of needs in each region and country and of an overall institutional strategy in this area.

Proposed action

35. The capacity-development efforts of the CSTs must focus on improving the capacity of national and regional experts and institutions. Each CST will therefore forecast future technical assistance needs in the region by analysing past patterns of demands. The CSTs will then focus their capacity-building efforts on building networks suited to those needs.

36. More focused efforts in capacity development will not only enhance the ability of CSTs to meet country needs for technical assistance but will support a key UNFPA goal to strengthen the capacities of national and regional institutions. Such initiatives will also highlight South-South cooperation within and between regions. A larger proportion of TAP funds will be assigned for this purpose. Ideally, the experts identified by the CST for technical support would be drawn from institutions within the region that have the potential to deliver sound technical assistance. Eventually, these institutions could become the main source of technical and strategic support for population activities in the regions.

37. Situations vary significantly from region to region. This will require flexible strategies to generate rosters and maintain networks. At the same time, UNFPA will pursue possibilities to pool advisers and merge themes within the United Nations system. Within the context of United Nations reform, UNFPA will further develop opportunities for collaboration and interchange of expertise. The CSTs will continue to synthesize, analyse, build on and disseminate lessons learned and best practices from country and regional experiences.

Challenge 4: Planning technical assistance

38. Planning technical assistance to countries by the CSTs has long been challenging. On the one hand, political and social circumstances change frequently in each country; on the other, opportunities arise continuously and new priorities are imposed. Using technical assistance effectively involves knowing how to take advantage of such opportunities. Unforeseen assistance and the continuing CST response to requests from country offices, whether planned or unplanned, make overall planning difficult. The lack of predictability in the nature, scale and timing of demands detracts from the ability of the CSTs to plan and be proactive. As a result, it is difficult for the CSTs to maintain their comparative advantage – the multidisciplinary nature of their interventions – and to shift the focus of their work to more strategic interventions.

Proposed action

39. In order to improve CST planning exercises, sharper priority-setting must become the standard. Focusing on the strategic role of the CSTs will help to make planning exercises more effective. The main opportunities arise in scheduling country programme exercises, such as programme evaluations and strategy formulation, as well as in the preparation of policy dialogue for country-level interagency activities.

40. These events are usually scheduled well in advance. This allows CST advisers to plan, together with the geographical divisions, country offices and the Technical Support Division, situation analyses and to take advantage of opportunities for policy dialogue with national counterparts and other development partners. It also permits the CSTs to carry out preparatory work for interagency activities, such as the CCA and the UNDAF. At the same time, the CST advisers should be able to prepare other policy analyses in accordance with regional needs and the priorities agreed upon in the annual regional planning meetings. An improved planning process will ensure that the CSTs maintain their comparative advantage: their institutional knowledge, multidisciplinary approach and regional perspective.

41. Technical assistance provided by outside experts requires advance planning. To respond more effectively, the CSTs should profile probable technical assistance needs in the region by analysing past patterns and, together with UNFPA geographical divisions and country offices, forecast technical assistance requirements in reproductive health, population and development, and gender. The increasing

convergence between the interregional and regional programmes, with technical assistance from the CSTs, will also improve the effectiveness of planning activities. The planning of technical assistance will be coordinated with two important initiatives: the UNFPA response to humanitarian crises, transition and recovery; and the UNFPA global strategy to promote reproductive health commodity security.

Challenge 5: Strategic partnerships programme

42. The strategic partnerships programme is building a coordinated approach with United Nations partners in order to provide technical assistance that draws on agencies' comparative advantages. UNFPA developed the strategic partnerships programme in accordance with the priorities of partners and in line with each agency's workplan, focusing on developing products to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of national population and reproductive health programmes.

43. The strategic partnerships programme is an important instrument in promoting increased cooperation between UNFPA and other United Nations agencies. Collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) has been particularly effective; interaction between CSTs and WHO regional offices, as well as between WHO and UNFPA country offices, has increased. As a result, UNFPA and WHO are introducing guidelines in 56 countries on family planning, maternal health and the control of sexually transmitted infections/reproductive tract infections. UNAIDS is providing funds to cover the salaries of HIV/AIDS advisers in eight CST offices. CST advisers helped to identify priorities for the UNAIDS unified budget and workplan for 2006-2007. Moreover, advisers from all CSTs participated in a World Bank Institute/UNFPA course on MDGs, poverty reduction, health reform and reproductive health. Collaboration with other agencies has been slower; UNFPA will have to make greater efforts to enlist other agencies in the strategic partnerships programme.

Proposed action

44. The strategic partnerships programme has the potential, within the context of United Nations reform processes, to enhance interagency technical capacity to support poverty reduction efforts through the implementation of the ICPD agenda. The agreement between UNFPA and WHO has shown that the strategic partnerships programme can provide CSTs with valuable tools that can be utilized at the country level to promote advances in reproductive health, population and development, and gender. Greater efforts will have to be made to achieve the same type of collaboration with other agencies. The strategic partnerships programme should help to address problems and devise strategies that require a common and coordinated approach for technical assistance at regional and national levels.

45. In 2004-2005, in an effort to expand the strategic partnerships programme, UNFPA initiated another round of discussions with United Nations agencies. UNFPA is collaborating with the United Nations Development Fund for Women to expand technical expertise to promote a gender-equality perspective in budgeting processes. Similarly, UNFPA is collaborating with UNICEF and WHO to strengthen technical expertise in selected institutions in South Asia in support of young people at risk for HIV infection. Negotiations are under way with the International Labour Organization to collaborate on sexual and reproductive health programmes within the informal sectors and with young men in the work place. UNFPA is also exploring cooperation with UNESCO.

IV. FORMULATING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

46. The foregoing discussion addresses issues affecting the TAP and the proposed changes for a two-year extension of the current programme. This extension will also be utilized to articulate a vision of future UNFPA technical assistance to countries and regions that will respond to the TCPR by serving as a catalyst for national dialogue among all stakeholders and by drawing on United Nations system competences and knowledge in a cohesive and efficient manner. UNFPA will develop options to provide more effective and collaborative technical support to countries so that national partners are able to meet their priorities. UNFPA will seek to enhance the effectiveness of the TAP to accelerate national progress to attain the MDGs through the implementation of the ICPD agenda.

Elements of a longer-term strategy

47. Building on the strategic direction, UNFPA will continue efforts to determine the appropriate structure of technical and strategic support consistent with United Nations reforms and the evolving needs of partner countries. UNFPA will define a cohesive format for the joint planning and delivery of technical assistance. The Fund's experience with respect to HIV/AIDS will serve as an example for this exercise. UNFPA collaborated with UNAIDS in analysing global and regional priorities and formulated initiatives that are being implemented effectively at global, regional and country levels.

48. Negotiations with other agencies on common substantive concerns will respond to country needs in a more coordinated way within specific regions and subregions, in accordance with the TCPR emphasis on an enhanced presence and coordination of United Nations agencies at the regional level. Within this context, UNFPA is exploring alternative options for deploying programme support currently located at headquarters to the field. The Fund will consider an enhanced regional presence with functions related to both programme management and technical and strategic support. Possibilities for increased coordination and location with United Nations partners are other important dimensions. For example, the Harare CST will be transferred to Pretoria, South Africa, in order to collaborate more closely with other United Nations agencies in the subregion and to enhance efforts to address the "triple threat" in southern Africa.

49. Capacity development will continue to be a primary concern. Sustainability in promoting the ICPD agenda depends, in large part, on national capacity-development efforts. UNFPA will precede capacity-building efforts with an updated analysis of regional needs and with the development of an overall institutional strategy. Each region will define strategies to increase the capacity at national and regional levels to address specific needs and priorities.

50. Beginning in 2008, the next TAP cycle will be harmonized with the biennial support budget, the multi-year funding framework and the intercountry programme. Thus, to serve countries more effectively, programmatic activities at all levels will converge with the planning of technical assistance. UNFPA will have developed a corporate strategy for capacity development and a clear vision for its technical support activities during the next cycle (2008-2011). This will be based on lessons learned during the TAP extension; trends in development assistance; and continuous analysis of the environment. On this basis, a proposal will be presented to the Executive Board in 2007.

V. ELEMENTS OF A DECISION

51. Considering ongoing United Nations reform processes, the UNFPA plan to change its current configuration to better meet national priorities, as well as the need to harmonize, from

2008, the cycles of the TAP, the biennial support budget, the multi-year funding framework and the intercountry programme, all of which require flexibility, the Executive Board may wish to:

(a) Approve the extension of the UNFPA Technical Advisory Programme for a two-year period, 2006-2007;

(b) Authorize the Executive Director to maintain the level of current funding and commit an amount of $40 million over the two-year period for its implementation;

(c) Request the Executive Director to report to the Executive Board on the implementation of the TAP during 2006-2007, and to present to the Board at its second regular session 2007, the new arrangements for the provision of technical assistance to programme countries during the period 2008-2011.

ANNEX

DESCRIPTION OF THE UNFPA TECHNICAL ADVISORY PROGRAMME

1. As approved by the Executive Board in decision 2002/3 for the period 2002-2005, the TAP constitutes the UNFPA strategy to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of its technical support in reproductive health, population and development, and gender. It is also a key element in implementing the strategic direction of the Fund. Specifically, the role of the TAP is to contribute to: (a) increased national and regional capacities to provide technical support for population and development programmes; (b) increased accessibility and use of technical information to improve the effectiveness of national population and development programmes; and (c) improved strategic technical support at key stages of the UNFPA country programme cycle as well as in United Nations system-wide processes such as the CCA and UNDAF.

2. The TAP is composed of nine multidisciplinary CSTs.[1] The TAP also includes the strategic partnerships programme with United Nations partners. The strategic partnerships programme improves the effectiveness of UNFPA programmes through project agreements focused on the priorities and comparative advantages of each partner organization.

3. The composition and technical skills of each CST respond to the specific needs and capacities of the regions and subregions in which they are located. The size and composition of the CSTs vary in accordance with the capacities and abilities of the country offices in each region to access other sources of technical assistance, including South-South cooperation. CST deployment in Africa is the largest due to the magnitude of the need and the priority given to this region by the United Nations system and the international community.

4. The primary responsibility of the CSTs is to provide strategic technical support and to develop capacity at regional and country levels. However, the CSTs also provide a field-based regional perspective and undertake knowledge sharing at organizational and regional levels. The nine teams, together with the Technical Support Division at headquarters, constitute the UNFPA technical advisory system, which provides integrated technical support to the UNFPA programming process.

5. The TAP is designed to support the new strategic direction of UNFPA, particularly the shift in emphasis from activities and projects to replicable models and lessons learned that influence policy dialogue. Within the framework of the strategic direction, UNFPA programmes are expected to generate partnerships through policy dialogue, reflecting evidence-based arguments. The CSTs, as the primary technical field presence of UNFPA, play a central role in promoting replicable experiences or models that will substantiate and legitimize the Fund's stance in policy dialogue and that will promote the ICPD more effectively.

6. The main functions of the CSTs are to: (a) conduct regional analyses and contribute to the development of regional strategies; (b) support capacity-building for technical assistance; (c) promote the UNFPA policy agenda; (d) share lessons learned and best practices; and (e) undertake strategic missions for the effective formulation and implementation of country programmes.

[1] Asia (Bangkok, Thailand; Kathmandu, Nepal; and Suva, Fiji); Latin America (Mexico City, Mexico); Arab States (Amman, Jordan); Europe (Bratislava, Slovakia); Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dakar, Senegal; and Harare, Zimbabwe).